

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) Individualized, dyed crosslinked cellulosic [[fluff]] pulp fibers, comprising dyed crosslinked cellulosic [[fluff]] pulp fibers treated with ~~a crosslinking agent, a whitening agent comprising one or more dyes, and~~ a bleaching agent, wherein the individualized, dyed crosslinked cellulosic pulp fibers have a Whiteness Index greater than crosslinked fibers that have been treated with a bleaching agent and not treated with a dye.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the ~~whitening agent comprises dye~~ is a blue dye.

4. (Original) The fibers of Claim 3, wherein the blue dye is an azo dye.

5. (Original) The fibers of Claim 3, wherein the blue dye is an azo metal complex dye.

6. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprise citric acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers.

7. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide.

8. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide in combination with sodium hydroxide.

9. (Currently amended) A method for making individualized, ~~whitened~~ dyed crosslinked cellulosic [[fluff]] pulp fibers, comprising:

applying a whitening agent, crosslinking agent, and optionally a crosslinking catalyst to a web of [[fluff]] pulp fibers to provide a web of treated fibers, wherein the whitening agent comprises one or more dyes;

separating the web of treated fibers into individualized treated fibers;

heating the individualized treated fibers at a temperature and for a time sufficient to provide individualized crosslinked fibers; and

applying a bleaching agent to the individualized crosslinked fibers to provide individualized, whitened dyed crosslinked [[fluff]] pulp fibers.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the whitening agent comprises a blue dye.

11. (Original) The method of Claim 10, wherein the blue dye is an azo dye.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 10, wherein the blue dye is an azo metal complex dye.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the crosslinking agent comprises citric acid.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the crosslinking catalyst comprises sodium hypophosphite.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide.

16. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide in combination with sodium hydroxide.

17. (Original) An absorbent product, comprising the fibers of Claim 1.
18. (Original) The product of Claim 17, wherein the product is a wipe, tissue, or towel.
19. (Original) The product of Claim 17, wherein the product is an infant diaper, adult incontinence product, or feminine hygiene product.